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# The Risk of the Pandemic: Covid-19s Effect on Risk and Protective Factors

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# The Risk of the Pandemic: Covid-19's Effect on Risk and Protective Factors

Stephanie Willis  
Longwood University

## Background

- 36.4% of college students are affected by depression and 41.6% of students are affected by anxiety (1).
- Social interaction and financial stability are 2 protective/risk factors.
- A risk factor increases the chances of development for a disease and a protective factor decreases that chance.
- Research has shown that little social interaction can cause symptoms of anxiety and depression (2). As can financial instability (3).

## Specific Aims

### Research Purpose:

To analyze the impact that social interaction and financial stability has on the mental health of Longwood University students during the Covid 19 Pandemic.

### Hypothesis:

Students who have had more social interaction and financial stability during the pandemic will experience less symptoms of anxiety and depression than that of students with little to no social interaction and less financial stability.

## Methods and Measures

- N=43
- Average Age=19.95, Females=28 (65%) , Males= 13 (30%), Non Binary= 2 (.06%)
- Participants were recruited from various psychology courses, and incentives included extra credit. Informed consent was obtained. These participants then completed a 5-8 minute survey.
- **Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS):** 14 questions, responses recorded on a 0-3 scale.
  - **Sample Question:** I feel tense or wound up
- **Financial Stress Index (Hayhoe, et al., 1999; Hayhoe, et ai. 2000; Lea, et ai, 1995):** 8 questions, responses recorded as yes or no.
  - **Sample Question:** Was there difficulty in paying for other expenses like room and board fees or a meal plan?
- **Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988):** 8 questions, responses recorded on a 5 point Likert scale. (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree)
  - **Sample Question:** I can count on my friends to be there when something goes wrong or awry.
- **Demographic Survey:** Age, gender, class year, and race.
  - **Sample Question:** What is your class year?

## Results and Conclusions

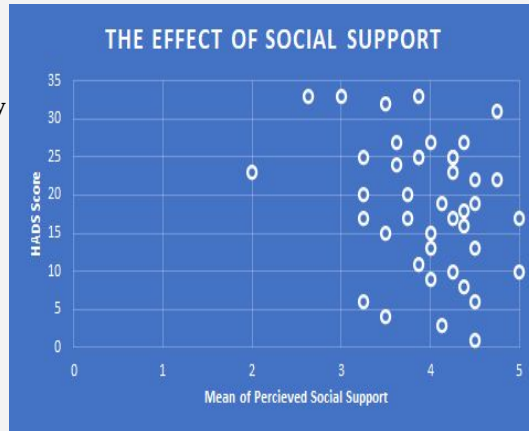
- Results from this study suggest that students who had more social interaction and financial stability during the pandemic experienced less symptoms of anxiety and depression than that of students who had little to no social interaction and less financial stability.
- College aged students can benefit from more social support to reduce their symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- A limitation in this study is that it does not possess strong external validity. This is because the data is limited to a college campus, so the findings cannot be applied to other groups because the correlation is unknown.

## Future Directions

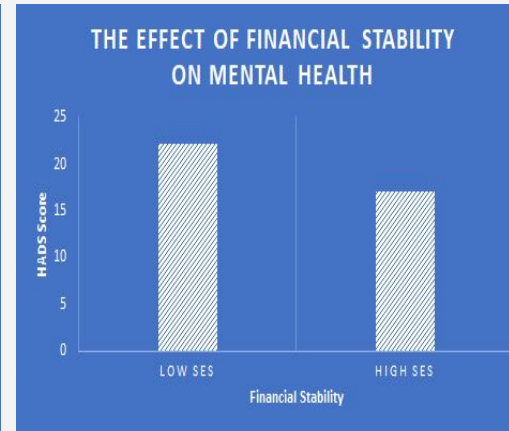
In the future, studies like this one should look at types of social support, whether it be online virtually or in person. The population should also be broadened to represent more cultures and individuals.

## References

1. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/06/college-students#-:text=Anxiety%20is%20the%20top%20presenting,clints%20were%20taking%20psychotropic%20medications.>
2. Waite, L., Hawley, L., & Thisted, R. (2006). Loneliness as a Specific Risk Factor for Depressive Symptoms: Cross Sectional and Longitudinal Analyses. *Psychology and Aging, 21*(1), 140-151. Retrieved 2020.
3. Butterworth, P., Rodgers, B., & Windsor, T. (2009). Financial Hardship, socio-economic position and depression: Results from the PATH Through Life Survey. *Social Science and Medicine, 69*, 229-237.



$r(41) = -.27, p = .040$



$t(40) = 1.87, p = .034$